

Michigan
Department
of Human
Services

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Articles in Today's Clips

Tuesday, Oct. 30, 2007

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Lawmaker wants Bridge Card benefits paid twice a month

By DAVID SALISBURY
Capital News Service

LANSING – A new bill would split federal food assistance payments into two monthly payments. But its necessity and effects on low-income recipients are open to debate.

The Department of Human Services (DHS) would continue providing the same level of benefits to recipients, but not in one lump sum at the start of each month.

One reason is to motivate the 565,588 households – representing 1,217,334 individuals – receiving assistance to manage their money more responsibly, said Maureen Sorbet, director of communication at DHS.

She said most recipients tend to spend all their benefits – deposited in Bridge Card accounts – soon after they get them. Often, their accounts are empty by end of the month.

“People are supposed to be trying to get off of welfare,” Sorbet said. “One of the steps of getting on one’s feet is learning how to budget themselves with limited funds.”

The average Bridge Card payment is about \$100 a month per household, but about 60,000 households get less than \$25 per month, Sorbet said.

Because so many recipients spend the bulk of their benefits almost immediately, grocers scramble to meet high demand the first 10 days of each month. Business considerably dies down the remaining 20 days.

Lisa Reibsome, communications director at the Michigan Grocers Association, said that her group has been “really pushing” for years for the policy change.

“It’s a great step forward for grocers,” she said.

Rep. Andy Meisner, D-Ferndale, is sponsoring the bill that’s in front of the House Families and Children's Services Committee. There are 20 Democratic and Republican co-sponsors.

Judy Putnam, communications director at the Michigan League for Human Services, said that such bipartisan cooperation means that the legislation has a good chance of passing.

However, Putnam said the Legislature faces bigger issues, such as the state budget crisis and possible government shutdown.

“There is merit to the issue,” Putnam said. “The idea is worth considering, but not at a time when the state is so strapped for resources.”

The policy change would impose one-time costs on DHS for technology changes and extended staff time to respond to recipient inquiries.

Sorbet said that even if the bill passes, the state would need federal approval because Washington funds the program.

But the federal government’s willingness to approve the change is uncertain.

A letter from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to DHS indicates that it opposes taking away the opportunity for recipients to decide when to spend their benefits because it would undermine the program's goal of self sufficiency.

Karen Stock, director of communications at DHS, said that the department is officially opposed to the bill.

“We serve the public,” she said. “This bill does not serve the recipients the way the current system does.”

Stock said DHS is proposing an alternative method for distributing benefits that keeps one payment a month spread over a 20-day period.

“That should meet the retailers’ needs and maintain the flexibility recipients get with one payment a month,” Stock said.

Stock said that DHS’s plan would cost about \$600,000 for technology upgrades and another \$14 million in added staff costs over two years.

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Article published Oct 30, 2007
Couple faces charges over pot
Police: Children removed from home, but were in good shape

By MOLLY MONTAG
Times Herald

WORTH TWP.- Police said a 29-year-old Worth Township man told them he started a hydroponic marijuana-growing operation in his basement because he couldn't get high enough from the marijuana he bought from area dealers.

Troopers from the Michigan State Police Sandusky post are expected to request felony charges this week against the man and his 22-year-old wife after 61 marijuana plants were found in the basement Friday. A pound of processed marijuana was found in the master bedroom of the home, the address of which has not been released.

State police initially were called to the house while helping a case worker from the Sanilac County Department of Human Services investigate an anonymous tip that the couple's children, who are 1 and 3, were in danger.

The woman took the children, who police said were not injured and were in good health, to live with their grandparents in Port Huron.

The man and woman will not be arrested until warrants are issued. Their names have not been released pending arraignment.

Trooper John Daily said there was about \$3,000 worth of drug-related equipment in the basement of the home.

Hydroponic marijuana plants are grown in water instead of soil, and their leaves are more potent than those from traditional plants.

Charges could include manufacturing marijuana, maintaining a drug house, marijuana possession and child endangerment.



Tuesday, October 30, 2007

Police: Drunken dad called drunken mom to pick up son

Doug Guthrie / The Detroit News

YPSILANTI -- Police detained a Northville couple after a wife who drove to pick up her young son when her husband was stopped for drunken driving showed up even more intoxicated than he was, police alleged. "I've never seen it happen like that to the same family in one situation," said Ypsilanti Police Sgt. Kevin Dorsey. "They made their bed. She had been drinking too."

The couple was jailed late Saturday and their children, a 12-year-old boy who had been traveling with his father and a 9-year-old girl who had been in the car with her mother, were released to a relative. Police declined to give the names of the suspects, who have been released. The incident has been referred to the Washtenaw County Prosecutor's Office. Charges could come later this week, said Steven J. Hiller, an assistant prosecutor.

A police report said the man was pulled over when an officer said he saw a Jeep run a traffic light at North Prospect and Cross Street shortly before 11:30 p.m. Saturday. The driver appeared intoxicated, and a breath test indicated he had an alcohol level of 0.11, well over the 0.08 legal limit, Dorsey said. Officers said they allowed the 12-year-old to telephone home for a ride, but when mom showed up in her Chrysler PT Cruiser, she too appeared to be drunk, police said. She told officers she'd drank some wine and became combative when she tried to leave the scene, police said.

Police said a breath test indicated her alcohol level was 0.13.

"We were going to turn the kids over to mom, but she was intoxicated too," Dorsey said. "She drew a lot of attention to herself."

You can reach Doug Guthrie at (734) 462-2674 or dguthrie@detnews.com.

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Hours apart, mom and dad both charged with drunken driving

October 30, 2007

ASSOCIATED PRESS

YPSILANTI — A husband and his wife -- both with children in the car -- were arrested on suspicion of drunken driving within hours of each other over the weekend.

Ypsilanti police told the Ann Arbor News they stopped the man and gave him a preliminary breath test after watching him allegedly run a red light Saturday night.

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Police said he registered above the 0.08 percent blood-alcohol limit. He had his 12-year-old son in the car with him.

The boy called his mother to pick him up, but when she arrived with her 9-year-old daughter, she also was found to be above the legal limit, police said.

Both children were turned over to a relative until the parents were determined to be sober.

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Bay City man facing sexual assault charges

Tuesday, October 30, 2007

THE BAY CITY TIMES

A Bay City man faces up to life in prison if convicted in a slew of sex crimes, involving victims ages 4, 8 and 10, that police say occurred while he baby-sat.

Officials also are investigating whether Jesse E. Cleary, 34, sexually assaulted other children in Saginaw, where he formerly lived.

Prosecutors charged Cleary with four counts of first-degree criminal sexual conduct and four counts of second-degree criminal sexual conduct for allegedly forcing the children to rub him sexually and to act out scenes from pornographic videos in his Bay City home.

One of the victims disclosed the abuse to her mother on Sept. 28, according to a state police report in Cleary's record in Bay County District Court.

The victims told investigators that Cleary threatened to "put a bullet in their mother's head" if they told anyone about the abuse, and showed them a gun while making the threat.

Police said the crimes occurred between March and September. Other assaults may have taken place before March in Saginaw, police said.

Detective Sgt. Andrew Longuski interviewed Cleary at the post, records said, and during the interview, Cleary signed a statement admitting to the abuse.

Bay County officials are holding Cleary without bond. The court scheduled a settlement conference for Friday, Nov. 9. v

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Muskegon Chronicle

Football star pleads guilty to sex assault; game status unclear

Tuesday, October 30, 2007

By John S. Hausman

jhausman@muskegonchronicle.com

A Montague High School student athlete has pleaded guilty as charged to felony sexual assault of an unconscious 15-year-old girl at a drinking party.

Shaun Lee Hladki, who turns 18 Thursday, pleaded guilty Monday afternoon to third-degree criminal sexual conduct. Before the plea, 14th Circuit Judge Timothy G. Hicks committed to cap Hladki's sentence at four months in jail.

When informed of the plea, school officials said they expect to decide this week whether the star receiver on the Montague football team can play in a playoff game Saturday and whether he'll face other school disciplinary action.

The judge did not immediately set a sentencing date but said it would be within three to four weeks. Hladki remains free on \$5,000 bond.

Hicks also may grant a request by Hladki's attorney, Ronald H. Pannucci, that Hladki get "youthful trainee" status. Under Michigan's youthful trainee law, a young first-time offender can have his conviction expunged if he maintains a clean record during a probationary period that can be as long as three years.

In Hladki's case, that would be the only way to continue court supervision after he serves a jail term. That's because Michigan's third-degree criminal sexual conduct law does not otherwise allow probation after a jail sentence: The sentence can only be incarceration or probation -- not both.

For that reason, the victim's family agreed to the youthful-trainee request, according to prosecutors.

The prosecutor's office did not immediately take a position on the youthful-trainee request and is reserving its arguments on that issue for the sentencing hearing, Chief Assistant Prosecutor Brett H. Gardner said this morning.

According to the State Police Grand Haven Post, the incident occurred the night of June 10-11 at Hladki's home at 7110 Meinert Park, where five underage students had gathered for a party involving vodka mixed with lemonade. Police investigated after being contacted by the victim's uncle.

According to reports, the victim, now a sophomore, was among those drinking. In statements to investigators, the girl said she had passed out at the party and did not know about the sexual assault until she was told about it by a friend.

By pleading guilty, Hladki admitted to the crime. He earlier told state police investigators he had sex with the girl and has tried to apologize to her family.

He and his victim have continued walking the same halls at Montague High School, and Hladki has been back playing for the school's state-ranked football team after serving a two-game suspension for an alcohol violation related to the alleged incident.

But the senior has not been disciplined for the assault, either in terms of sports participation or school attendance. School officials said they were waiting for the court system to resolve the case before deciding what to do.

That wait-and-see stance continued this morning.

Superintendent Dave Sipka, informed by a Chronicle reporter of Hladki's guilty plea, said school officials -- after they are officially notified of the details of the court proceedings -- will determine what action to take based on school safety laws. A decision is likely this week, before the football team's next game, Sipka said.

"We're going to have to take a step back and see," Sipka said. "Is he a threat to other students? Those kinds of questions. So we, the board of education and administration, will have a lot to mull."

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Tuesday, October 30, 2007

Was Bush's kid care veto prudent or unfair?

Granholtz lacks morality

Gov. Jennifer Granholm recently introduced "morality" into discussions of the State Children's Health Insurance Program when she wrote: "Providing health care to our most vulnerable children is a moral issue" ("Support kids health care, prevent untreated tragedy," Oct. 18). I find her declaration presumptuous. Granholm vetoed Michigan's Legal Birth Definition Act four years ago, which would have protected our most vulnerable children from the atrocity of partial birth abortion, which is also a moral issue. She now supports medical research on human embryos causing their deaths.

Ed Leslie

Farmington Hills

Voting against children

U.S. Rep. Thaddeus McCotter supports war, tax breaks for oil and big corporations and his own health care, but he votes against our children ("Fund care for kids first, cover adults separately," Oct. 18). I know many children and families who need and use this help. I also know many more who do, but the money isn't there. McCotter needs to have his health care stopped and salary cut like the rest of us.

H. Hudak

Canton Township

Middle-class subsidies?

Gov. Jennifer Granholm would like us to believe that the SCHIP program provides health care to poor children only. But 18 states allow four-person families with incomes of \$62,000 to be eligible for the program. The governor fails to point out that our tax dollars would be subsidizing these middle-income families. Michigan taxpayers should not be asked to fund benefits in state with higher income eligibility when our own state is in dire financial straits.

Tom Cotter

Farmington Hills

Have compassion

To U.S. Rep. Joe Knollenberg and the other of our GOP members of Congress who voted against SCHIP, I ask: How would they like it if they made \$80,000 a year, had a family of four and had to pay out of their pockets for the top-rated health care provided by taxpayers for them?

Jim Karavite

Royal Oak

Beware expensive riders

The State Children's Health Insurance Program bill was vetoed because of the expensive riders that were attached to it. Remember, this is OUR money that is being spent on things quite often not needed by anyone other than a small special interest group. Riders should be outlawed so government bills can be passed more quickly and efficiently.

Ellen K. Percy

Bloomfield

A sad day for kids

It is a sad day for the children of Michigan, thanks to a few who want to stay in step with President Bush. The children that the bill would have covered are from families that work hard every day, but still cannot afford insurance for their children.

This legislation would have been paid for by putting a \$1-a-pack tax of cigarettes, so if you don't smoke, you wouldn't have to worry that your tax money's not going to be used.

Jamie N. Brock

Clarkston

Pass modest expansion

The voice-of-reason editorial "Repair, reinstate child health care program" (Oct. 19) was a welcome reprieve from the almost hysterical pro-SCHIP (State Children's Health Insurance Program) propaganda put out by Democrats and the Archdiocese of Detroit, among others.

The original Republican legislation provided health coverage to children of low-income parents who did not qualify for Medicaid. The plan was working and should have been re-authorized with modest expansion.

Janusz M. Szyszko

Canton Township

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Tuesday, October 30, 2007

Opinion

Treat mentally ill like normal folks

Learn from abuses of patients, such as those at former state-run hospitals

Tom Watkins

Today, beautiful upscale condos and a new shopping plaza are going up to grace the west and east corners of Five Mile and Sheldon in Metro Detroit. Yet memories of isolation, human warehousing, neglect and abuse come to mind when I pass this intersection.

This isn't a case of an overindulgent imagination -- but rather documented cases of abuse that took place on this site to some of our community's most vulnerable people: people with developmental disabilities. Ironically the name of this institution of abuse was then known as the Plymouth Center for Human Development.

This state institution was out of sight and out of mind located in the then countryside. When it opened in the 1960s, it was considered "state-of-the-art" and housed as many as 1,200 people there at its peak in 1970.

Giving up philosophy

The conventional wisdom at the time was if your child was "disabled," give him or her up to the state. "Give them to the state and get on with your life" was the refrain. As a nation and a state, our history of care for people with disabilities has been vile and ugly.

Why bring up this unseemly history? Because "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

Last month I witnessed just how far we have come from this corner of abuse while attending the annual Friends of Community Living Services' "Evening with Friends Awards Ceremony." The evening was a celebration of the freedom that persons with disabilities have gained over the years. Nearly 1,000 attendees trumpet the value of their friends and family members who happen to have a disability.

Freedom brings triumph

If there ever was a cure for depression or being a sourpuss, it was attending this event. The triumph over adversity, love, friendship and pure human decency wrapped itself around you every second during this celebration of life, dignity and respect.

The man who captured this essence and brought tears to my eyes is Lake Orion resident Joe Johnson, the outreach coordinator and lead trainer at Community Media Network in Troy. Johnson has trained hundreds of community members in video production.

When people with disabilities signed up for his class, Johnson did not create a "special" segregated class for these men, but enthusiastically included them in his "regular" class. The fact that Johnson has the active support of H. Jay Wiencko Jr., executive director, just adds icing to the cake of human decency. In accepting his award, Johnson said he was honored and felt he received much more than he gave. Yet the most touching thing he said in accepting the awards was this simple truth: "I long for the day that common human decency to our fellow man, being kind, thoughtful and giving to *all* people, is the norm and not something to be singled out for recognition."

Yes, it will be a great day of celebration when that day comes but, until then, thank you and Community Media Network for helping to set the stage and lead the way for us all.

Remember, dignity is nothing more than the freedom of allowing people to be themselves.

Tom Watkins was Michigan's state superintendent of public instruction from 2001 to 2005 and Michigan's mental health director under Gov. Jim Blanchard from 1986 to 1990. Reach him at tdwatkins@aol.com.

Please fax comments to (313) 222-6417 or e-mail them to letters@detnews.com.



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Published October 30, 2007

More budget bills move, but work remains

Midday update

David Eggert
Associated Press

The state Senate continued approving parts of a new state budget today, but a final deal still hinged on resolving whether to turn over more adoption, foster care and juvenile justice services to private agencies.

One budget bill headed to the House would cut funding to the Michigan Supreme Court, Michigan Court of Appeals, drug treatment courts and other judicial programs. Another would fund the Department of Agriculture.

Four budget bills have been sent to Gov. Jennifer Granholm, and many more should be on the way later today.

But some sticking points remain. Lawmakers recessed a morning meeting aimed at moving forward on a spending plan for the state's Department of Human Services.

Legislators and Granholm disagree over a plan that would put more DHS services into private hands.

Republicans say money can be saved, but labor unions don't like the idea because state workers would lose their jobs.

The Legislature has until Wednesday to pass the budget bills to avoid another partial government shutdown such as the one that occurred in the early hours of Oct. 1.

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Budget bills move, but dispute remains over privatizing services

10/29/2007, 8:29 p.m. ET

By **DAVID EGGERT**
The Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — With little time left, lawmakers and Gov. Jennifer Granholm were still divided Monday over whether more private providers should handle adoption, foster care and juvenile justice services — the big sticking point in resolving the state budget.

But other signs of progress emerged as both the House and Senate began passing spending plans for several state departments before adjourning Monday night. Spending plans for a few agencies, including state police, have cleared both chambers and are headed to Granholm. The Legislature will reconvene Tuesday to try and finish trimming \$433 million from the budget, either through cuts or by restricting planned spending increases.

Final action could depend on reaching an agreement over whether more functions in the Department of Human Services should be handed to private agencies.

The Legislature has until Wednesday to pass the budget bills to avoid another partial government shutdown such as the one that occurred in the early hours of Oct. 1.

Sen. Bill Hardiman, R-Kentwood, is among those pushing to put more DHS services into private hands.

He said it costs the state \$550 a day to house each youthful offender at the W.J. Maxey Boys Training School in Whitmore Lake, but it would cost only \$225 to \$250 a day if the youths were dealt with through private companies.

"We need to move forward in this area. The money we save, we can spend in other needed areas," Hardiman said. "To ignore this, I think, is absolutely wrong."

Granholm, a Democrat, opposes giving more DHS services to private providers. So do labor unions representing state workers who would lose their jobs if their work is taken over by private agencies.

Democrats have argued that handing more responsibility for adoptions, foster care and juvenile justice over to private agencies is risky and would not necessarily save money. They have said it could endanger children at a time the state is under scrutiny for the deaths of some foster children.

But Hardiman points out that private agencies already provide 40 percent of such services to Michigan children. He wants to partially close Maxey and send some offenders to less expensive facilities.

Negotiators from the Republican-led Senate and Democratic-controlled House have mostly agreed on handing more services over to private agencies, despite Granholm's objections, Hardiman said. But because the governor could veto the bill if she doesn't like it, negotiations continue.

Lawmakers avoided disagreements over whether to increase hunting and fishing fees and environmental permit fees by delaying the decisions until later. Budget bills passed by the House and pending in the Senate for the departments of Environmental Quality and Natural Resources assume that fees would rise but give the Legislature until Jan. 15 to vote on specific increases.

Republicans and some Democrats have been reluctant to embrace higher fees, even though both departments have said staff and services will have to be reduced if the fees aren't raised.

DEQ officials have warned that they might have to lay off 200 to 300 workers and turn some permitting functions over to the federal government, while the DNR — which has not raised hunting and fishing fees since 1996 — could lay off 79 workers. Other cutbacks include closing two state forest campgrounds, two fish hatcheries and some DNR field offices.

Rep. Doug Bennett, D-Muskegon, said some of the environmental fees have not been raised in 10 or 15

years and cited concerns within the business community about permitting delays if funding is not increased.

"It's a serious, significant problem," he said, arguing that the delays could hurt economic development. Others say the fee hikes would hurt businesses.

Sen. Michelle McManus, R-Lake Leelanau, said legislative leaders have told her they intend to fully fund the DNR, whether through fee increases or other options. She said she personally hasn't take a position on higher fees proposed by Granholm.

"It certainly is a problem that requires a legislative solution, rather than a department solution," McManus said.

The House approved a higher education budget that would give all 15 state universities a 1 percent increase in operations funding from last year. Lawmakers also voted to separate funding for the University of Michigan, Wayne State University and Michigan State University from the state's 12 other universities, noting they have more of a role in research. The Senate could vote on the bill as early as Tuesday.

Counting other forms of funding, including compensation to help cover unfunded payments in a tuition waiver program for American Indians, some of the state's 12 smaller universities will get a bit more than a 1 percent increase. Lake Superior State University would get a 2.4-percent boost.

The Legislature's bill retains about \$56 million in tuition grants for students at private schools.

The House also passed a bill that would provide an average 1 percent funding increase for community college operations.

The House also adopted a Department of Community Health budget that doesn't kick any groups off of Medicaid coverage. The chamber also passed a spending bill for the state's prison system that would reflect some previously agreed to housing unit reductions and include more use of Global Positioning System units to track parolees.

The state police budget includes some reductions that could result in the closing of one or two forensic labs, possibly in Marquette and Sterling Heights.

The Senate could also vote on those bills Tuesday.

Associated Press writer Tim Martin contributed to this report.

On the Net:

Michigan Legislature: <http://www.legislature.mi.gov>

Gov. Jennifer Granholm: <http://www.michigan.gov/gov>

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Tuesday, October 30, 2007

Legislators crank out budget bills

Lansing House-Senate committees race clock to avoid second shutdown of Michigan's government.

Mark Hornbeck and Gary Heinlein / Detroit News Lansing Bureau

LANSING -- The Michigan Legislature started churning out spending bills Monday in an effort to approve a balanced budget by the midnight Halloween deadline.

House-Senate conference committees had passed 13 of the 17 budget bills by late Monday night, and 10 of those compromise bills had passed the House and four were approved by the House and Senate.

For every department budget that passes the House and the Senate, that's one less area of state government that would shut down Thursday morning, if there is another breakdown in negotiations.

Conference committees include members of both parties and both houses, and they try to reach compromises on bills that have passed the House and Senate in different versions. Each house must then vote on the pacts.

A few snags remained, most notably a dispute between Senate Republicans and Gov. Jennifer Granholm on privatizing foster care, adoption and juvenile justice services.

Privatization advocates say state money could be saved by contracting for some services.

Sen. Bill Hardiman, R-Kentwood, who chairs the conference committee on the human services budget, said the Senate and House are close on the issue, but the governor has not signed off on moving services from the state to private hands. House Appropriations Chairman George Cushingberry, D-Detroit, said Granholm doesn't want to cut unionized state jobs.

Also, the conference panel on the transportation budget is entangled over an issue involving state funding for a study of an additional Detroit River crossing between Detroit and Windsor. Senate Republicans want to make sure the state study doesn't interfere with plans by Ambassador Bridge owner Manuel "Matty" Moroun to build a second span across the river.

House Speaker Andy Dillon, D-Redford Township, said late Monday he was confident the Legislature would finish the budget today.

In other budget news:

- The House passed budgets that assume \$5 increases in hunting and fishing license fees and increases in fees for environmental permits. But lawmakers still would have to approve those fee hikes later to avoid major cutbacks by the departments of natural resources and environmental quality. There is no guarantee the Legislature will pass the fee hikes.
- For the first time, Michigan's three largest research universities will get special recognition. The conference committee on higher education unanimously approved the \$1.9 billion budget for the 15 public universities, including a provision that places University of Michigan, Michigan State University and Wayne State University into a separate class as major research institutions. The Big Three universities will not get any additional money this year -- they'll get the same 1 percent increase as the other dozen state universities -- but their status could net them more funding in the future as the state attempts to set up a collaborative college research triangle for economic development.
- Tuition grants for private college students were retained in the conference report but reduced by \$2.1 million, to \$56.7 million. This is tantamount to a statement from lawmakers that they're not interested in gutting the program. Granholm has threatened to veto the money for tuition grants.
- The House passed a conference agreement on prison spending at just under \$2 billion that calls for \$80 million in savings. Cost-cutting measures include the closing of three prisons and a prison camp.
- The House-approved budget on history, arts and libraries does not include a one-time, \$24 million

expenditure sought for the Detroit Zoo, Detroit Institute of Arts and Detroit Historical Museum to ease their transition from city operation to oversight by nonprofit organizations.

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STATEWIDE

Budget bills move despite disputes

October 30, 2007

BY CHRIS CHRISTOFF

FREE PRESS LANSING BUREAU CHIEF

LANSING -- Bearing down on a midnight Wednesday deadline to set a new state budget, lawmakers agreed Monday to protect the state's three research universities from future budget cuts, maintain Medicaid coverage for everyone who gets it now and delay until January a decision to raise hunting and fishing license fees.

But disagreements remained over how much of the state's foster care and juvenile justice programs should be placed under private agencies.

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The Legislature has until the end of Wednesday to set a budget that shows about \$435 million in spending cuts. That's the second part of an Oct. 1 deal that raised the state income tax to 4.35% and levied the 6% sales tax on some services.

How that \$435 million in cuts is achieved came down to a few contentious points as conference committees approved most of the 17 budget bills. Four then were approved by the House and Senate and sent to Gov. Jennifer Granholm for signing -- budgets for the departments of State Police, Military and Veterans Affairs, Labor and Economic Growth and History, Arts and Libraries.

There was no agreement to raise hunting and fishing license fees or fees that businesses need to discharge air and water pollution. But conference committees assumed those fee increases would be enacted by Jan. 15.

They approved budgets to reflect those future fee increases: \$8 million for the Department of Natural Resources and nearly \$13 million for the Department of Environmental Quality.

Rep. Mike Lahti, D-Hancock, a member of the DNR budget conference committee, said there are enough votes in the House but not the Senate to increase hunting license fees by \$5. Lahti said he hopes Senate support builds as it becomes clearer what the DNR would cut without the fees, including closing 37 state parks and recreation areas.

The DEQ would be forced to lay off 200 to 300 employees if air and water permit fees are not increased.

Also, a conference committee signed a \$12-billion Community Health budget that increases Medicaid payments by \$373.2 million. The agreement retains Medicaid coverage for 19- and 20-year-olds and child caretakers. The Community Health budget includes a 4% raise for union and nonunion employees, as previously negotiated.

Under an agreement on state aid to universities, the University of Michigan, Michigan State University and Wayne State University won't get any more money but will be in a separate category that could boost their funding in future years.

The deal includes \$57 million for grants to private college students, which Granholm has said she opposes. But budget director Bob Emerson said a veto of the private aid won't necessarily happen if the entire state budget is otherwise balanced.

Talks continued Monday over Senate Republicans' insistence to privatize more of the state's foster care and juvenile justice programs. The plan is especially opposed by state workers who would lose their jobs.

Sen. Bill Hardiman, R-Kentwood, said privatizing youth offender programs could cut those costs in half in some cases.

But House Speaker Andy Dillon, D-Redford Township, warned against micromanaging those programs, which he said involve complicated behavioral and legal issues.

Contact **CHRIS CHRISTOFF** at christoff@freepress.com. The Associated Press contributed to this report.

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People News appears Sunday through Friday. Have an item about people in and around Lansing to contribute? Please mail items to Vickki Dozier, People News, Lansing State Journal, 120 E. Lenawee St., Lansing, MI 48919, fax them to her at 377-1298 or e-mail them to vdozier@lsj.com.

Vickki Dozier: Caring for Kids fundraiser is Thursday

People News

Vickki Dozier
Lansing State Journal

State Department of Human Services employees will hold their annual Caring About Kids fundraiser bake sale, pizza lunch and silent auction Thursday at the DHS administrative office in the Grand Tower Building, 235 S. Grand Ave. The community is welcome to attend.

The day's events begin at 7:30 a.m. with a bake sale, a silent auction with bids accepted all day, a pizza lunch from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. and a 50/50 raffle drawing at 4 p.m. Lunch will be served by new DHS Director Ismael Ahmed and Chief Deputy Director Stanley Stewart along with other "celebrity" servers.

It is the major fundraiser for Caring About Kids Inc., a volunteer nonprofit charitable organization that has raised and distributed funds since 1994 to meet the special needs of the community's foster children. These special needs include musical instruments through a partnership with Marshall Music, birthday gifts, camp, tutoring, gift certificates, trips and outings for foster children and families.

The Caring About Kids Board of Directors includes DHS employees Julie Horn Alexander, Wendy Campau and David Russell, and DHS retirees Norm Charles, Margaret Grost, Jean Hoffman and Sue London.

The board also includes former Office of the Attorney General, Social Services Division attorneys Donald Allen (CAK board president) and Rose Houk. They are joined by Michigan State Police employee Abby Meyer; Melissa Threadgould, Community Mental Health of Clinton, Eaton and Ingham Counties; and John Waugh, Pacesetter Mortgage Co.

To donate auction items, call Nancy Ridley at 241-7443.

To purchase raffle tickets, or for information about the auction or about Caring About Kids, call Julie Horn Alexander at 351-0965.

E.L. children's film festival entries needed